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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 BEIJING 002482

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TAGS: [PHUM](#) [SOCI](#) [PGOV](#) [CH](#)
SUBJECT: PROMOTING TIBETAN EDUCATION HELPS QUELL SOCIAL
ILLS IN NOMADIC AREAS

REF: A. CHENGDU 83

[B](#). 06 CHENGDU 1011

[C](#). 06 CHENGDU 969

[D](#). 05 CHENGDU 322

Classified By: Political Internal Unit Chief Susan Thornton. Reasons 1
.4 (b/d).

[1](#). (C) Summary: Tibetan monks from Qinghai and Gansu Provinces recently described efforts to reintegrate traditional cultural and religious elements into the curricula of two privately funded schools for underprivileged nomadic Tibetans in Qinghai's Golok Prefecture. Resettled Tibetan nomads are not enrolling in government-run schools as hoped, leading to crime and security concerns in urban areas. The monks view their more traditional schools as a potential remedy for these social ills, but note the need for more support. These private schools address gaps in public education by providing courses for over-age young adult students in traditional Tibetan cultural subjects such as philosophy, numerology, debate, and Tibetan poetry, history and literature. End Summary.

Efforts to Preserve Traditional Tibetan Education

[2](#). (C) Jigme Gyaltsen (strictly protect), a monk originally from Qinghai Province founded the Jigme Gyaltsen Charity School for Boys in 1994 in Golok Prefecture, a primarily nomadic area. For the past decade, the school has been supported solely by donations from private sources. The school's 700 students are over-age nomadic, pastoral and monastic youth who have not had access to traditional secular education and who speak only Tibetan language. The majority of the teachers, with the exception of two provided by the local education bureau, are volunteers.

[3](#). (C) In 2001, Jigme founded a similar school for girls, which began operations in 2005. The decision to build the school in an isolated nomadic area presented severe infrastructure challenges. Infrastructure or the school had to be built by resettled nomadic villagers and students from the boys' school. The school, which now has 200 students, is supported by the Italian NGO, ASIA, and has a number of teachers provided by the local education bureau.

[4](#). (C) The goal of Jigme and Vice Headmaster Tsutrim, a monk scholar from Labrang Monastery in Gansu Province, is to provide a traditional Tibetan education, complemented by "mainstream" subjects such as math, science, history, Chinese and English. Jigme, Tsutrim and the teachers have developed a full curriculum of traditional Tibetan education subjects that includes religion, philosophy, debate, history, culture and language.

Failures of Public Education in Tibetan Areas

15. (C) Jigme lamented that public schools in Tibetan areas fail to provide such traditional Tibetan cultural subjects as numerology, debate, and Tibetan poetry, history and literature. He added that the government curriculum for teaching Tibetan language follows the principles of Chinese language instruction in that it is taught "word by word," and does not allow Tibetan culture to be incorporated.

16. (C) Asked whether students in private schools could be successful in the transition to upper education, Jigme responded affirmatively. Education authorities at first insisted that graduates enroll in an additional three years of secondary school prior to taking the college entrance exam, but then realized the students were far more academically qualified than their peers in public secondary schools. Currently, education officials allow the private school students to enroll in college directly after completion of the six-year course of study and passing the college entrance exam.

Effect of Nomadic Resettlement Policies on Education

17. (C) Jigme said that educators had been disappointed by the effects of nomadic resettlement programs on school enrollments. The hope was that nomads resettled near the prefectural capital would enroll in much higher numbers than they did while engaged in a nomadic herding lifestyle. In fact, the enrollment rate for families resettled near the city was only five percent, similar to what it was when they were still herding, Jigme stated.

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18. (C) Resettled young people that have not enrolled in school are tending toward crime and security concerns are increasing in urban areas, according to Jigme. In response, the Qinghai Government has stopped moving nomads to the prefectural capital and is now resettling them farther away. Jigme described a discussion with members of the provincial Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference (CPPCC) in which they advocated that all nomads should be resettled and develop a "third" or service industry. Jigme said he told the government this was impossible and rhetorically asked them to consider whether "educated government officials would be capable of going out to develop a service industry on their own." Jigme concluded by saying he believed nomadic resettlement was not the only way to promote education, improved health and economic development.

Need For More Universities for Tibetan-Speakers

19. (C) According to Jigme, his educational model has been affirmed by the support from the provincial and prefectural governments and education bureaus. Jigme said he was recently asked by the Qinghai governor, an official of the provincial education bureau and other intellectuals to found a private Tibetan-language college to accept the many Tibetan-speaking secondary school graduates who are unable to gain acceptance in China's minority universities. Tibetan-speaking high school students may take the college entrance exam in Tibetan, but may only enroll in a minority university. If students wish to enroll in other universities, they must take the college entrance examination in Mandarin Chinese. In 2006, there were 1,500 Tibetan-speaking high-school graduates in Qinghai who passed the college entrance exam, but did not get places in minority colleges. Jigme said he felt the request affirmed his educational work on behalf of Tibetans and signaled significant government support. He admitted that he has begun to look into the possibility, but expressed concern

about finding funding for such an ambitious venture.
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